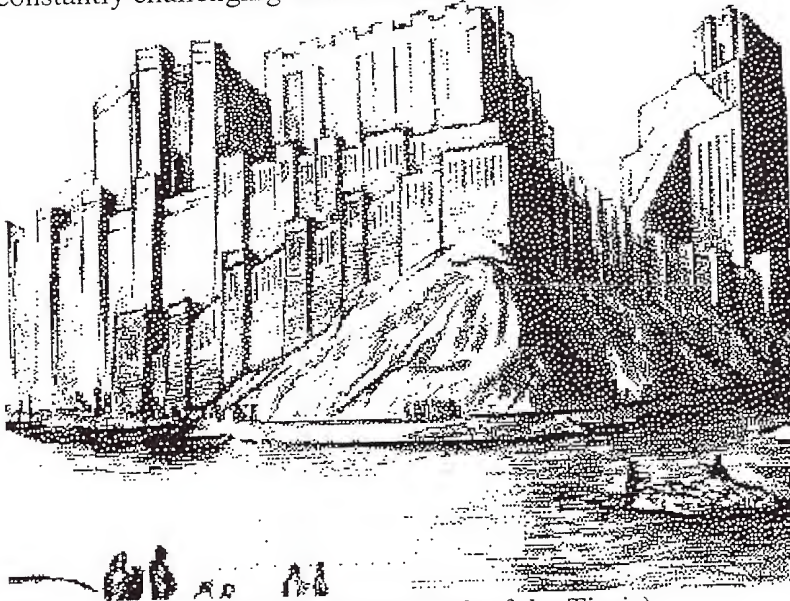


The Assyrian Captivity

722 B.C. - 605 B.C.



A kingdom between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers that dominated the ancient world from the ninth century to the seventh century B. C. Its capital was Nineveh. The Assyrians are called Kurds today, their land is called Kurdistan. They descend from **Shem's son Asshur**, read **Genesis 10:22**. The early inhabitants of Assyria were ancient tribesmen who probably migrated from Babylonia. They grew powerful enough around 1300 B. C. to conquer Babylonia. For the next 700 years they were the leading power in the ancient world, with their leading rival nation, Babylon, constantly challenging them for this position.



The ancient city of Ashur (west bank of the Tigris)

After King Solomon's death the nation of Israel was split into two Kingdoms around 971 B.C. read **2nd Chronicles 10-13**. Solomon's son Rehoboam was King over the Southern Kingdom which consisted of Judah, and Benjamin. Jeroboam was King over the Northern Kingdom of Israel [which consisted of ten tribes]. The tribe of Levi were the priests and as such had no allotment of land, they were scattered among all the tribes of Israel to do service for the Lord on their behalf. But Jeroboam cast them out; to the Kingdom of Judah.

2nd Chronicles 11:13: *And the priests and the Levites that were in all Israel resorted to him out of all their coasts.*

14: *For the Levites left their suburbs and their possession, and came to Judah and Jerusalem: for Jeroboam and his sons had cast them off from executing the priest's office unto the LORD:*

15: *And he ordained him priests for the high places, and for the devils, and for the calves which he had made.*

16: *And after them out of all the tribes of Israel such as set their hearts to seek the LORD God of Israel came to Jerusalem, to sacrifice unto the LORD God of their fathers.*

It was the Assyrians that destroyed the northern kingdom Israel [ten tribes of Israel includes the tribe of Dan] under Shalmaneser IV who besieged Samaria and then died during the siege leaving Sargon II to finish the task and drag Israel into captivity. After defeating the northern kingdom of Israel in **722 B. C.**, the Assyrians carried away thousands of Israelites and resettled them in other parts of the Assyrian Empire. This was a blow from which the northern kingdom of Israel never recovered.



Assyrian policy was to deport conquered peoples to other lands within the empire, to destroy their sense of nationalism, and break any pride or hope of rebellion and replace them with strangers from far away.

2nd Kings 17:24 *And the king of Assyria brought men from Babylon, and from Cuthah, and from Ava, and from Hamath, and from Sepharvaim, and placed them in the cities of Samaria instead of the children of Israel: and they possessed Samaria, and dwelt in the cities thereof.*

25: *And so it was at the beginning of their dwelling there, that they feared not the LORD: therefore the LORD sent lions among them, which slew some of them.*

26: *Wherefore they spake to the king of Assyria, saying, The nations which thou hast removed, and placed in the cities of Samaria, know not the manner of the God of the land: therefore he hath sent lions among them, and, behold, they slay them, because they*

know not the manner of the God of the land.

27: Then the king of Assyria commanded, saying, Carry thither one of the priests whom ye brought from thence; and let them go and dwell there, and let him teach them the manner of the God of the land.

28: Then one of the priests whom they had carried away from Samaria came and dwelt in Bethel, and taught them how they should fear the LORD.

29: Howbeit every nation made gods of their own, and put them in the houses of the high places which the Samaritans had made, every nation in their cities wherein they dwelt.

30: And the men of Babylon made Succoth-benoth, and the men of Cuth made Nergal, and the men of Hamath made Ashima,

31: And the Avites made Nibhaz and Tartak, and the Sepharvites burnt their children in fire to Adrammelech and Anammelech, the gods of Sepharvaim.

32: So they feared the LORD, and made unto themselves of the lowest of them priests of the high places, which sacrificed for them in the houses of the high places.

33: They feared the LORD, and served their own gods, after the manner of the nations whom they carried away from thence.

34: Unto this day they do after the former manners: they fear not the LORD, neither do they after their statutes, or after their ordinances, or after the law and commandment which the LORD commanded the children of Jacob, whom he named Israel;

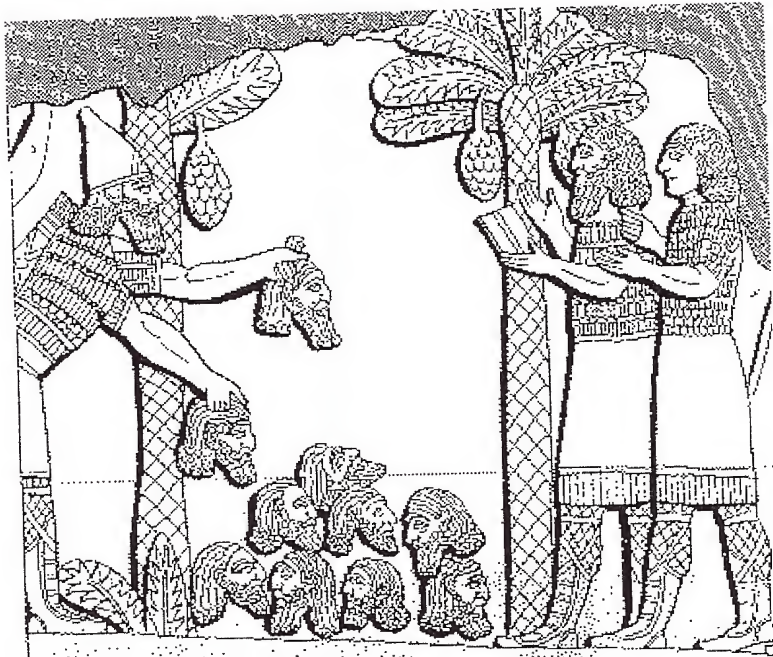
Assyrians were great warriors. Most nations at that time period were looters, building their state by robbing other nations. Assyria was the most ferocious of them all. Their very name became a byword for cruelty and atrocity. They skinned their prisoners alive, and cut off various body parts to inspire terror in their enemies. There is records of Assyrian officials pulling out tongues and displaying mounds of human skulls all to bring about stark horror and wealthy tribute from surrounding nations. Nowhere are the pages of history more bloody than in the records of their wars.

Around 710 B.C. King Sennacherib came against the Kingdom of Judah to also conquer and enslave them.

2nd Kings 19: 35: And it came to pass that night, that the angel of the LORD went out, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians an hundred fourscore and five thousand: and when they arose early in the morning, behold, they were all dead corpses.

36: So Sennacherib king of Assyria departed, and went and returned, and dwelt at Nineveh.

37: And it came to pass, as he was worshipping in the house of Nisroch his god, that Adrammelech and Sharezer his sons smote him with the sword: and they escaped into the land of Armenia. And Esar-haddon his son reigned in his stead.



Assyrian scribes recording the number slain

The Prophet Tobit was taken into the Assyrian captivity by Shalmaneser the 4th [called Enemessar in Tobit 1:2]. Tobit became the Kings purveyor/buyer; his job was to provide the Kings food and provisions. Tobit also testified that when his son Sennacherib became king of Assyria he attempted to conquer the Kingdom of Judah but the Lord destroyed his army. So upon his return to Nineveh he was filled with wrath against Israel and killed many, commanding that their bodies not be buried. Less than fifty days later, two of Shalmaneser sons murdered him; and his son Sarchedonus [Essarhaddon] reigned as king.



Assyrian king putting out the eyes of an enemy king and leading the officials into captivity with hooks in their lips

Assyria was a world empire for about 300 years under several warrior kings some of which wielded Assyria into the best fighting machine of the ancient world. Finally the brutal empire fell in 607 B.C. giving way to the Babylonians.

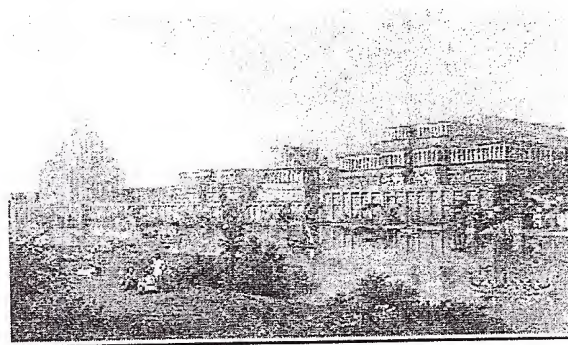


The ruins of Nineveh

"And He will make Ninevah a desolation . . ." (Zeph 2:13-14)

On the east bank of the Tigris river lay massive mounds of ruins where there stood the splendid capital city of the Assyrians with its great palaces and buildings. There is record of Alexander the Great, when he was near Nineveh, not recognizing that it once was the center of the great Assyrian empire.

The religion of the Assyrians, much like that of the Babylonians, emphasized worship of nature. They believed every object of nature was possessed by a spirit. The chief god was Asshur. All other primary gods whom they worshiped were related to the objects of nature. These included Anu, god of the heavens; Bel, god of the region inhabited by man, beasts, and birds; Ea, god of the waters; Sin, the moon-god; Shamash, the sun-god; and Ramman, god of the storms. These gods were followed by five gods of the planets. In addition to these primary gods, lesser gods also were worshiped. In some cases, various cities had their own patron gods. The pagan worship of the Assyrians was vehemently condemned by several prophets of the Old Testament (Is. 10:5; Ezek. 16:28; Hos. 8:9). The prophet Tobit of the tribe of Nephtali was taken in this Captivity read Tobit 1:1,2.



Israelite Captives from Lachish



This sculptured wall relief was excavated at ancient Nineveh and illustrates the fall of Lachish by the army of king Sennacherib of Assyria. He drove the inhabitants into captivity. Sennacherib was later routed at Jerusalem by the Angel of the Lord, he had captured 36 cities.

This real historical picture of the Hebrew Captives from Lachish is an amazing discovery in Biblical Archaeology because it is a clear testimony that God does not show partiality and when His people rebelled against Him, He allowed them to be taken away from His presence and deported to Assyria. *Notice the negro hair texture, proving Israelites are black people. This wall relief is now in the British Museum.*

Here is a list of most of the later kings of Assyria

885-605 B.C.

Assur-nasipal II (885-860 B.C.)

Shalmaneser II (860-825 B.C.)

Shansi-adad (825-808 B.C.)

Adad-nirari (808-783 B.C.)

Shalmaneser III (783-771 B.C.)

Assur-dayan (771-753 B.C.)

Assur-lush (753-747 B.C.)

Tiglath-pileser III (Pul) (747-727 B.C.)

Shalmaneser IV-(Enemessar)(727-722 B.C.)

Sargon II (722-705 B.C.)

Sennacherib (705-681 B.C.)

Esar-haddon (681-668 B.C.)

Assur-banipal (668-626 B.C.)

Assur-etil-ilani (626-605 B.C.)

Assyrian annals mention contacts with some nine Hebrew kings: **Omri, Ahab, Jehu, Menahem, Pekah, Uzziah, Ahaz, Hezekiah, and Manasseh.**

Because of the cruelty and paganism of the Assyrians, the Hebrew people harbored deep-seated hostility against this nation. This attitude is revealed clearly in the Book of Jonah. When God instructed Jonah to preach to Nineveh, the capital of Assyria, Jonah refused and went in the opposite direction. After he finally went to Nineveh, the prophet was disappointed with God because He spared the city. 150 years later The prophet Nahum spoke against Assyria indicating that they were ripe for the slaughter.

